

Ruby Keeler

Ruby Keeler was born Ethel Hilda Keeler, in 1909, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her family, originally from Ireland, decided to move to the United States when Ruby was a toddler. The Keelers passed through Ellis Island in 1912 and settled in New York City. Ruby attended Catholic school while her father delivered ice door to door.

Although the family was poor, Mr. and Mrs. Keeler enjoyed ballroom dancing and even won a number of dance contests; they were delighted when Ruby showed talent in this area. She enrolled in dance school and by age 12 had become a regular performer in Prohibition-era theaters and clubs, under the watchful eye of her stage mother. At 13, she lied about her age (the legal age to work was 16), and became a chorus dancer.

In 1928, Ruby was discovered by producer Flo Ziegfeld. That same year the 18-year-old met and married the famous entertainer Al Jolson, then 46 years old. Their marriage was difficult, and ended in divorce in 1940.

Ruby Keeler made her big-screen debut in 1933, starring in “42nd Street”, a Busby Berkeley musical extravaganza. She also starred in a number of other musicals such as “Gold Diggers of 1933” and “Dames”.



Trailer shot of Ruby Keeler in “Dames”

An avid golfer, Ruby met her second husband, a real estate agent named John Homer Lowe, on the links. They married in 1941 and Ruby retired from show business. Keeler and Lowe eventually had four children.

Thirty years later, she came out of retirement to star once again for Busby Berkeley in “No, No, Nanette” on Broadway.

Ruby Keeler died in February 1993 and is honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.